

Dear Editor,

My comment is on the article on duck hunting by Eliza Sears in the Hamilton Spectator (20 Jan 2022). Very little attention was given to the negative impacts of shooting ducks on our lakes and swamps and one supporter got his facts wrong. Terry from Strathdownie stated that there are 100,000 hunters in Victoria. Maybe there are that many hunters but only about 25,000 are licensed and of those less than half actually went duck-shooting in recent years. It is a very minor activity but it has great negative consequences to the environment and costs to tax-payers.

Leaving aside the issues of conservation, cruelty to animals and negative impacts on regional tourism, it is an odd thing that such a tiny minority can cause such an enormous drain on the public purse each year. The cost of running the Game Management Authority (GMA), of surveying duck numbers and of policing the shooters could be

avoided by ending the barbaric 'sport' of duck hunting in Victoria.

Two aspects are continually ignored by the GMA. One is the disturbance created by shooting on a wetland. The impact of a single shooter can make it impossible for members of the public to get within hundreds of metres of the birds at any time of the year. The GMA and government steadfastly refuse to provide sanctuaries where the birds are not disturbed by hunters. Is that a fair deal? I would call it bloody-minded. A local example is Lake Linlithgow, which once had sanctuary status, accidentally revoked in 1975 when the Wildlife Act was revised. It was recognized in 2021 as one of 6 priority sites in Victoria for migratory shorebird habitat. It is a major regional conservation reserve that should not be shot over.

The second aspect is the impact of hunting on inland wetlands that are favoured by migratory waders, such as Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, Curlew Sandpipers and Red-necked Stints. These tiny birds have to gain enough body mass during the autumn in order to sustain them on the 10,000 km flight to the Arctic regions where they breed. These species are finding it harder to undertake such a journey, due to losses of coastal feeding grounds in the Yellow Sea. Surely the GMA can set aside some areas that are not hunted over?

ROD BIRD  
Hamilton



*Australia's rarest native duck, the Freckled Duck, collateral damage in Victoria's recreational duck shooting seasons.*

*Pic by Eleanor Dilley*